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A Package Deal Full of Holes



Image source Wikipedia.

The Biden administration has been working on a package deal with Saudi Arabia that would guarantee a path to a Palestinian state in return for a permanent cease-fire and establishment of Saudi-Israel relations. But the Saudis want more for themselves: a U.S.-Saudi mutual defense pact and cooperation on a civilian nuclear program in the kingdom. Those are steps too far: They risk bringing the US into a war with Iran and contributing to a “peaceful” nuclear program that could evolve into a Saudi bomb program.

Of course, the biggest obstacle to this deal is Israel. Prime Minister Netanyahu’s government is unalterably opposed to a Palestinian state. To the contrary, Netanyahu and his far-right comrades seem determined to empty Gaza and the West Bank of Palestinians, and resettle

those territories with Israelis—their final solution. Their military strategy since Oct. 7 makes clear that war is preferable to a negotiated settlement, with the invasion of Rafah and intensified fighting in the West Bank the latest examples.

The high-level diplomacy with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) that the New York Times is reporting (May 17) seems designed to force Netanyahu's hand: Take the deal and obtain formal recognition from the Saudis or fight an endless war with decreasing support from your friends.

Peace or isolation, in short. But don't bet on a change of mind in Tel Aviv. These people care most about staying in power and cleansing Israel of an entire people. And that's quite apart from the merits of the proposed deal, which (to my mind) argue against pursuing it in its present form.

You can't trust MBS any more than you can trust Netanyahu.

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